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terizing the pyloric cæca of the star-fish as of unknown function, and to advance so far, at least, as to characterize them as important digestive glands, very similar in function to the pancreas of higher animals.

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EDITOR'S TABLE.

The confusion in the popular mind in regard to what biologists mean by "acquired character" is shown in a recent article by Prof. Cesare Lombroso,¹ and more strikingly in an editorial, apropos of this same article, which appeared a short time ago in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*.²

Lombroso cites a number of cases which he regards as furnishing proof of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. In speaking of the development of the well known mental traits of the modern Hebrews he says: "Here we have a series of acquired psychical characteristics which have become heredity. This, no doubt, is due to some extent to climatic influences—transportation to colder countries—but more particularly to selection by persecution, as only by activity and the appearance of meanness and sordidness could the Hebrews have been saved from the fierce persecutions against which bold resistance would have been of no avail. It is this fact that made these vices prevail, and that caused the extinction, little by little, of those qualities—courage, generosity and boldness—that would have been more harmful than useful under the particular conditions." Again, in speaking of American traits of character, Lombroso says: "It happens because a race among the most robust of Europe has been transported to different surroundings; and the struggle for existence—rendered fiercer in the wilderness and among hostile tribes—if it served to destroy the weaker, gave room for the greater development of the strong, in whom qualities, perhaps already existent in the pacific Briton, but not yet unfolded for lack of occasion, emerged in the new adaptations required for new adventures." One might almost suppose these sentences to have been

¹ Lombroso, C.: The Heredity of Acquired Characteristics. *The Forum*, October, 1897, pp. 200-208.

² *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, October 21, 1897, Vol. 137, No. 17, p. 427.

written by the most orthodox of neo-Darwinians. Nowhere in his paper does Lombroso offer any proof that the characteristics mentioned are not fortuitous variations. He takes it for granted that because a character is new and adaptive, that it is an acquired character become hereditary. There seems to be in his mind the very common confusion between the terms "new" and "acquired."

The editor of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* is suffering from a much worse confusion of the terms, for he has not yet learned to distinguish between infection and heredity. When the medical profession has demonstrated that syphilis is not an infectious disease, we shall be ready to accept congenital syphilis as an acquired character that has been inherited. Besides other cases of this kind, the editor cites the case of a child born of a mother who had taken from eight to fourteen grains of morphine daily, commencing soon after marriage. The three preceding children had died soon after birth. In this case the child, a ten pound girl, on the third day became sleepless, pale and prostrate, and five minutes later died. What possible bearing can a case like this have upon the question of the inheritance of acquired characters? Knowing the effect of morphine upon the adult, it is far from surprising that a child that had been bathed in and fed on morphine from the moment of conception until birth, should show some results of such treatment. We may have here an acquired character, but the evidence of inheritance is absolutely nil. It is a case of poisoning, not of inheritance.

The report of the proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Boston Society of Natural History³ has been lying upon our table for some time. We are glad to note that Prof. Hyatt has nearly completed the descriptive part of his work on the Achatinellinæ of the Hawaiian Islands. It is to be hoped that this very complete collection of land shells purchased by the Society in 1890 from the Rev. J. T. Gulick, will soon be placed on exhibition. It is one that will be of the greatest interest to all students of evolution.

It is announced, also, that considerable progress has been made upon the collection illustrative of "dynamical zoology," and it is gratifying to know that it will be put in place during the present year.

³ Proceedings Boston Society of Natural History, Vol. 28, No. 2, p. 45-72.